

Numbers 31:8-54 - Thursday, March 3rd, 2011

- Last week we only made it to verse seven due in large part to the text dealing with the battles of life as it relates to spiritual warfare.
- Moses is given his last assignment. It's to take God's revenge and go to war against the Midianites for what they did to the Israelites.
- Vs. 1-7 are packed with life lessons. Heavens path is paved with battles. We need armor and weapons for the victory in those battles.

"The Christian is a holy rebel loose in the world with access to the throne of God. Satan never knows from what direction the danger will come."

A.W. Tozer "That Incredible Christian," p. 71

- There's one more thing that we should have in our hip pocket, before we move on to verse eight, as it's germane to our understanding.
- This is a spiritual battle because vis-a-vis Balaam, Midianite women seduced the Israelite men to sin against God in the spiritual realm.
- It's for this reason that Phinehas a priest as the son of Eleazar who was one of Aaron the High Priest's son, was sent instead of Joshua.

- Now, the reason I'm taking the time to lay this foundation is because absent this understanding there may be a huge misunderstanding.
- Here's why: we'll now see what would be deemed graphic details in God's vengeance against the Midianites, and it's for good reason.
- In other words, this is the why behind the what of what we're about to see happen in the rest of this chapter as gnarly as it's going to be.

8 They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of those who were killed -- Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. Balaam the son of Beor they also killed with the sword. 9 And the children of Israel took the women of Midian captive, with their little ones, and took as spoil all their cattle, all their flocks, and all their goods. 10 They also burned with fire all the cities where they dwelt, and all their forts. 11 And they took all the spoil and all the booty -- of man and beast.

- Don't you find it interesting that we're told how Balaam died in this battle as well. This is the end of those who would try to curse Israel.
- I would suggest, on the authority of God's Word in Genesis 12:2-3, that this will be the end of those who today, wish to curse Israel.
- There's something else here that I want us to see as it relates to the death of Balaam. Listen to what he said back in Numbers 23:10.

Numbers 23:10 NIV Who can count the dust of Jacob or number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my end be like theirs!"

- The reason he didn't die the death of the righteous, and have his end be like theirs, is because he did not live the life of the righteous.
- Let me say the same thing a different way; he did not live his life, right with God, thus he didn't die at the end of his life right with God.
- In this we call our "walk with the Lord," there must be steadfastness in our rightness with the Lord, in how we live our lives for the Lord.

12 Then they brought the captives, the booty, and the spoil to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the children of Israel, to the camp in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho. 13 And Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the congregation, went to meet them outside the camp. 14 But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, with the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, who had come from the battle. 15 And Moses said to them: "Have you kept all the women alive? 16 Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

- This is a problem! The very women who caused the problem at the start, have been brought back into the Israelite camp in the end.
- In all fairness to these 12,000 men who did this; they spared and kept the women and children because they posed no military threat.
- Please don't think that this is excusing what they did, rather, this is explaining why they did what they did. However, they were wrong!

17 Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately.

- It's misunderstanding Old Testament verses like this that have given God so much bad press in portraying Him as a God of wrath.
- Perhaps you'll indulge me as I attempt, once again, to fill in some blanks as it relates to God commanding them to kill these Midianites.
- God in His grace, is showing mercy on these Midianites who have already sealed their fate. Furthermore, He is protecting the Israelites.

18 But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not known a man intimately.

- This further reinforces what we just saw in the previous verses, in that God is gracious and merciful to those whose fate wasn't sealed.
- Also, it's important to understand that as girls they wouldn't later avenge the death of their fathers as was the Midianite way for as men.
- One last thing, had they not done what they did here, it would've most certainly been to their peril and led to their ultimate destruction.

19 And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person, and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. 20 Purify every garment, everything made of leather, everything woven of goats' hair, and everything made of wood."

- God will deal with the cleansing of those who had carried out God's vengeance, so as to purify both them and even their garments.
- I see this as being both practical in the physical sense, and symbolic in the spiritual sense, in that it becomes a cleansing for both.

21 Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone to the battle, "This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses: 22 "Only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead, 23 everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean; and it shall be purified with the water of purification. But all that cannot endure fire you shall put through water. 24 And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean, and afterward you may come into the camp."

- This is interesting because it is packed full with meaningful information as it relates to us by way of application in our Christian lives.
- Here's what I'm thinking; notice they had to put all the precious metals through the fire to be cleaned, and in the water to be purified.
- So too is this true for us; our faith as precious gold goes through the fire to remove dross, and we're washed by the water of the Word.

Isaiah 48:10 NKJV Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

1 Peter 1:6-7 NIV In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. (7) These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Ephesians 5:25-27 NIV Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (26) to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, (27) and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

25 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 26 "Count up the plunder that was taken -- of man and beast -- you and Eleazar the priest and the chief fathers of the congregation; 27 and divide the plunder into two parts, between those who took part in the war, who went out to battle, and all the congregation.

- It's important to note that, while the spoil was usually kept by those who went to war, in this case, God wants it divided into two parts.
- The reason is that God wants all the Israelites to partake of the blessings even though they were not amongst those in the battle.
- I think this speaks to how it is when we are the recipients of many blessings that came from those who have labored in battle for us.

28 And levy a tribute for the LORD on the men of war who went out to battle: one of every five hundred of the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep; 29 take it from their half, and give it to Eleazar the priest as a heave offering to the LORD. 30 And from the children of Israel's half you shall take one of every fifty, drawn from the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep, from all the livestock, and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle of the LORD."

- Here again we have another one of those places where a passage reinforces the previous text. It's more blessed to give than receive.
- This is seemingly the lesson from these verses by virtue of how those who battled gave 1/500th and those who didn't gave 1/50th.

31 So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses. 32 The booty remaining from the plunder, which the men of war had taken, was six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep, 33 seventy-two thousand cattle, 34 sixty-one thousand donkeys,

- Now, I am keenly aware that what I'm about to say is purely conjecture in the sense that we don't have it mentioned in the text.
- However, it is certainly possible that in those sixty-one thousand donkeys, there may have very well been one donkey who could talk.

35 and thirty-two thousand persons in all, of women who had not known a man intimately. 36 And the half, the portion for those who had gone out to war, was in number three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep; 37 and the LORD's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and seventy-five. 38 The cattle were thirty-six thousand, of which the LORD's tribute was seventy-two. 39 The donkeys were thirty thousand five hundred, of which the LORD's tribute was sixty-one. 40 The persons were sixteen thousand, of which the LORD's tribute was thirty-two persons. 41 So Moses gave the tribute which was the LORD's heave offering to Eleazar the priest, as the LORD commanded Moses. 42 And from the children of Israel's half, which Moses separated from the men who fought -- 43 now the half belonging to the congregation was three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep, 44 thirty-six thousand cattle, 45 thirty thousand five hundred donkeys, 46 and sixteen thousand persons -- 47 and from the children of Israel's half Moses took one of every fifty, drawn from man and beast, and gave them to the Levites, who kept charge of the tabernacle of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses. 48 Then the officers who were over thousands of the army, the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, came near to Moses; 49 and they said to Moses, "Your servants have taken a count of the men of war who are under our command, and not a man of us is missing. 50 Therefore we have brought an offering for the LORD, what every man found of ornaments of gold: armlets and bracelets and signet rings and earrings and necklaces, to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD."

- So, after being told how much went to the Israelites and how much was given to the Lord, we also told that not a man was missing.
- In other words, of the 12,000 men who went to war, not a single one of them died in battle. I believe there's a reason for all this detail.
- I would suggest that these men were so grateful to God for not only their victory, but their very lives that they cheerfully gave this tribute.

51 So Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from them, all the fashioned ornaments. 52 And all the gold of the offering that they offered to the LORD, from the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, was sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels. 53 (The men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself.) 54 And Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tabernacle of meeting as a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD.

- This is as fascinating as it is convicting. Here's why; they are so in awe of what God did, they offer this as a memorial before the Lord.
- They give to the Lord all this abundance to express their praise and thanksgiving to Him for His abundance and goodness to them.
- Don't miss this! Our worship of God, and our service to God, comes as a response to all that we have been the recipients of, from God.